

Purposes for Marriage, Part 2—Genesis 1 & Malachi 2—7/20/25
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Today we continue the marriage refresher series that I began last week.

This differs from our normal detailed exposition in 1 passage, but we need to recall biblical wisdom in this vital area of life.

Whether you are married or not, you need to be anchored in a biblical view of marriage because it is the most basic human institution.

As we saw last week, God led the first wedding by bringing the first woman to the man & pronouncing them one flesh.

God made the woman for the man as his helper & commanded that a man should leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.

That's not a cultural construct or an evolved survival tactic.

Marriage is not something that can be redefined like our rebellious nation & government have tried to do by court rulings in this century.

Marriage originated as God's idea with God's design & God's guidelines & we cannot just approach it however we wish.

We must have a heart surrendered to God's revealed will in His Word.

And as we stated to begin last week, we must respond to God's Word on marriage with a commitment of faith to trust & obey.

We do not approach God's Word on marriage or anything else with a mindset that we'll try it—we don't TRY God's clear commands.

We trust His Word as right & we trust His power to help.

Of course, first we trust God to forgive our failures to obey His Word that leave us deserving of His judgment rather than His blessings.

We glory in His grace in Jesus Christ as the God-man who died sacrificially to pay sin's penalty for us who trust Him.

We marvel & rest in God providing His own solution to our sin problem by coming as God the Son to be sinless like we cannot.

And we treasure Jesus as our righteousness and redemption that grants us freedom from sin's punishment & power.

We exult in Jesus' resurrection as assuring & securing all He is for us.

That new life by faith in Christ is where we must start.

We will not see lasting transformation in any of our relationships unless we surrender in faith to Jesus as Lord & Savior.

But then we don't just try His ways, we follow His ways by grace through faith & we leave the results in His hands.

We walk by internal faith, not by mere external methods.

That's why it's helpful to return to basic purposes of marriage as we live every aspect of life in response to God & His Word.

We need to think about ourselves as creatures made in God's image who need fellowship, who need relationships, who cannot be isolated.

That's true for singles in all stages of life who need the interactions of body life within the church.

And it's true intimately in God's design for most to share the closest companionship in marriage as we discussed last week from Genesis 2.

God was purposeful in creating man & woman to show the need for companionship & to distinguish their different roles.

So much can be learned from soaking in the creation narratives & there's 3 more purposes of God's design that will outline today.

We were in the extended coverage in Genesis 2 last week, but let's step back to the big picture of Genesis 1 this morning.

Turn to Genesis 1 & let's read Genesis 1:26-31. [READ]

On this 6th day of history, God created man as the culminating peak of His work.

We know that from God's words to Himself & God's words to man.

God's words to Himself show us the plurality within the One true God—that God is as both 1 & in some way more than 1.

Later revelation clarifies those equally divine Persons in the Trinity.

God said to make man *in Our image, according to Our likeness* & that was distinct from all the other creatures God had made.

That image of God includes His plan for man to rule over creation.

That's the connection in verse 26—man is to represent God's rule over the rest of creation, to be the king in this kingdom.

And just as God referred to Himself with singular & plural pronouns, God referred to man with singular & plural pronouns.

Last week we saw the purposeful chronology of God creating man first as the leader & then creating woman as his helper.

And we find that order here too—verse 26 speaks of making man, & verse 27 says God created man, in the image of God He created him.

But we also find plural terms—verse 26 God said to let them rule & verse 27 says male & female He created them.

Then verse 28 records God's blessing on them, as He spoke to them, with each of the 5 commands having a second person plural subject.

It's like God said: y'all be fruitful & y'all multiply & y'all fill the earth & y'all subdue it & y'all rule over the creatures.

God was clearly speaking to both the man & the woman.

God charged both man & woman—them together—with the blessings of laboring to rule God's creation.

And here we find two more purposes for marriage in verses 26-28.

The first of those purposes is in the first 3 commands of verse 28—be fruitful & multiply & fill the earth.

Those commands point to the purpose of having children so you can note that as purpose #3 overall & a 1st additional point to note today.

A 3rd purpose of God for marriage is CHILDREN.

To review, we've said that God designed marriage (1) for companionship, (2) for completion—or for complementary roles.

And now #3, God designed marriage for **children**.

To enjoy God's blessing & follow His command in Genesis 1:28, married couples should seek to be fruitful & multiply & fill the earth.

That reality of that being both a blessing & a command again reminds us that God governs results & controls outcomes.

So I've known faithful married couples who wanted the blessing of these commands, but who were not able to have children.

Some pursued this blessing by adoption & some in other ways of ministering to children & younger people.

We don't always understand God's providence as He controls the opening or closing of the womb & how this purpose is experienced.

But those difficulties highlight the strangeness & often selfishness of people who say they don't want kids.

That's been increasingly popular in the past half-century with the death-cult-like devotion to abortion & related declines in birth rates.

So let's be clear about that—abortion is murdering a baby while that baby is being cared for inside a woman's body.

It is evil to invade the safety of a mother's womb to kill such a child.

But think of the motivations behind such decisions & consider how they may arise in those not wanting to have children.

Often excuses are about the work & expense of kids that will require a sacrifice of time or money or career or freedom or other relationships.

Such excuses should cause us to examine our purpose in life.

Why are we here?—Are we only living for selfish individualism or comfort-loving freedom or the greed of more stuff & better escapes?

Of course, I'm grateful that you all love children & celebrate babies & pray for married couples in the various trials of having children & raising children & relating to adult children.

As I've said before, I'm thankful to be in a church where we are a raging rebellion against the culture of death as we enjoy relationships with older saints & we cherish the care of young lives.

We don't cast off the aged & aging because we profit from the wisdom of experience in both failures & successes.

And we don't avoid the glad hope of investing in generations to come.

Again, as Psalm 127 says, children are a gift from the Lord, a heritage & reward, a trust from God.

So kids are not guaranteed, but they are to be desired if at all possible.

I understand temporary reasons to wait may arise & it's a case-by-case wisdom issue of when & how & how many children.

So we must not go beyond what's written, but we must also be clear that rejecting all desire for children is not biblical.

Psalm 128 exalts the blessings of a fruitful family & Malachi 2:15 extols God's design of raising a godly offspring.

And in that sense, raising children is evangelistic—it's continuing the creation blessing of filling the earth & subduing it & ruling over it.

When I think of the clearest commands about parenting in the OT & NT, I think of Deuteronomy 6 & Ephesians 6, which both have that evangelistic, God-centered emphasis.

In a section on loving God & His Words, Deuteronomy 6:7 says *you shall teach them* [God's Words] *diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up*.

The goal & prayer with children is to train them to know God through His Word in applying it to every area of life.

We were not created to be dead ends or stagnant ponds, working toward time off so we can take it easy & eventually retire.

We were created to be channels of truth flowing to others as God's Word goes to another generation by His grace.

So don't envy or honor the DINK lifestyle as lastingly desirable—DINK meaning the Dual-Income-No-Kids—that's a bad life goal.

That's a selfish rejection of one of God's purposes in marriage.

This was true from the beginning & through Israel's history as texts like Psalm 78 extol telling God's works to generations to come.

And it's still true in the church as Ephesians 6 gives the charge to fathers that is applied to all parents.

Ephesians 6:4 says: *fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Training up children are this 3rd purpose we note for marriage.

As with other purposes, we walk by faith & trust God for the outcomes of having children & seeing children come to faith & persevere.

We seek to be faithful & we do it together in the body of Christ whether we have our own children or not.

But as we honor the gift of children, we also affirm that they are work.

So God also designed for married couples to be coworkers in God's commands for life & family & rule in creation.

So we can note a 4th overall purpose that is evident in Genesis 1 that overlaps with the points we made last week from Genesis 2.

Married couples are not only companions with complementary roles, but also coworkers in God's blessings & commands.

We labor together in the stewardship to provide food & shelter & to manage order & responsibilities & children & more.

So God designed marriage for (1) companionship, (2) completion, (3) children, & (4) co-laboring or being coworkers.

We've already noted the plural pronouns where God spoke to THEM & the charges to y'all plural for stewardship & rule & children.

The man & the woman were given responsibility together.

Both man & woman were told to have dominion over the animals & earth & to be fruitful & fill the earth & subdue it.

God purposed for there to be a partnership in that work.

When I think of this in ministry, some of you know one of my favorite illustrations of this in the NT is Aquila & Priscilla as coworkers.

Acts 18 tells of the married couple Aquila & Priscilla serving together in ministry & in their tent-making business.

Together they counseled the mighty speaker Apollos in private as part of their partnership in the work of ministry.

Together they showed Apollos the way more excellently.

They were partners in that ministry work.

That is a blessing of God to share & to profit from.

And we want to value that in God's design for marriage.

You hear me speak more than my wife Melanie, but a lot of what I say has been run by her first to see if it makes sense.

In the first 5-10 years of my ministry & maybe longer, I used to read over each sermon with Melanie before preaching it.

I didn't want to say something untimely or distracting or confusing or triggering because the truth is offensive enough.

The goal was to be clear & understandable & traceably biblical.

And since many are honoring John MacArthur this week after he went to be with the Lord, I'll add that I can still hear him saying "*whatever you do—don't bore people with the truth.*"

So I have always wanted to connect biblical truth with the everyday lives of people so that we feel its impact & are not bored.

I'm not saying I always succeed, but my wife is my coworker who has heard hundreds of sermons & given vital feedback.

She was my coworker who persevered even when life was busy & exhausting & our kids were demanding & ministry was hard.

So I love what Peter Goeman, who was here in May, wrote as the dedication to his excellent book *The Baptism Debate*.

I trust you enjoyed his ministry, but you likely did not get to know his wife because she was managing their 4 kids ages 8 & under.

Peter Goeman's book dedication well said, "*To my wife, Kinsley, The fruit of my labor is equally yours.*"

The fruit of his labor was equally hers because she is his coworker.

That's a statement of God's design & purpose for marriage.

So this design of God teaches us to appreciate & cultivate & utilize each other's gifts in marriage.

We support each other & that's not all one-sided as if only one partner needs the other or one partner's gifts are better.

We both need each other as coworkers.

And by the way, let these truths remind us all how important the church is for singles & widows & single parents.

God's design for marriage teaches us to be His hands & feet in caring for single parents & their kids & in the church loving all singles.

And today's final point turns us toward singles & how we all think about choosing a spouse & preparing for marriage.

Since marriage is a companionship of complementary coworkers who raise children in the Lord, there is only one way to seek marriage.

It is to marry only in the Lord, as 1st Corinthians 7:39 says it.

It is to marry someone who shares the same faith in Christ.

Since all of life is governed & guided by God & surrendered to serving Christ, marriage must be set apart to Him.

To keep with the alliteration of C's, you might say marriage must be consecrated—5thly, God designed marriage for consecration.

God designed marriage for (1) companionship, (2) completion, (3) children, (4) co-laboring, & (5) consecration.

By consecration, I mean being set apart as holy & devoted to God.

I mean being dedicated together to living in the power of the Holy Spirit in obedience to God's Word for the glory of Christ.

I mean take my life & let it be, consecrated Lord to Thee.

I mean take my moments & days & hands & feet & voice & lips & money & mind & will & heart & love & self & therefore also my marriage & children & everything as set apart to God.

That kind of devotion can only be shared with another Christian.

You've likely heard 2nd Corinthians 6:14 applied to being married only in the Lord & so let's turn to 2nd Corinthians 6.

Paul was defending his apostleship in this letter & calling his readers to openness in relationship with him & separation from the world.

Let's read 2nd Corinthians 6:14-18 where he called them to be set apart to God & not joined with unbelievers. [READ]

This has many applications for not to be unequally yoked, but it is most often applied to a believer not marrying an unbeliever.

Yoked means bound together & you don't want to be joined with a dead weight or someone pulling in a different direction.

Just as it is uneven to put a huge ox and a small pig together in the yoke of a plow to pull it, so a believer does not fit with an unbeliever.

The direction & goals & priorities of believers & unbelievers are all different—or at least they should be.

So why hitch yourself to someone following a false god?

You have to think long-term about your daily life & legacy & what you want to live for & pass on to your kids & others.

Those are issues not to compromise just because someone looks hot in workout clothes or is friendly when you are lonely.

Those are issues not to forget when you get attention that flatters you and makes you feel special or easy to talk to.

Listen—it is a serious SIN for a believer to marry an unbeliever.

It's also heartbreaking & conflict-making & troublesome.

If you are a Christian, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit as the temple of the living God & you are to be set apart for worship of Him.

So you must approach marriage as part of that consecrated life.

Never lower that standard or think it's ok to date someone who is an unbeliever & say you'll only marry them if they become a Christian.

Don't start on that path & arouse your feelings & cloud your thinking with desires for something God has said is wrong.

And if you rationalize that you will spend time with the person evangelistically dating them, don't fool yourself.

God has graciously saved souls despite such folly, but don't count on it or presume that your motives are ok for disobeying.

In contrast, what often happens is that the unbeliever pulls the professing believer away from God.

Sometimes the unbeliever even claims to be a believer just to get the believer to date him or her.

So don't go there—commit not to entertain ideas or feelings for anyone who is not clearly a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

And parents, realize how important this is to teach & shepherd your kids about—even when they are among church kids.

Look, young people—prepare your own life first & examine the lives of others before you even consider a relationship.

But some here might ask—what if you are already stuck?—Is there any hope for those already married to an unbeliever?

If you realize you have sinned by marrying an unbeliever, then you can humbly repent of your wrong & trust Christ to forgive.

But He doesn't immediately want you to reverse your mistake.

He takes marriage so seriously that He does not just say to quit the marriage if you realize you are unequally yoked.

Especially if you came to Christ after you were already married, 1st Corinthians 7 speaks directly to you.

1st Corinthians 7 addresses your situation with one basic phrase throughout—remain as you are when you came to Christ.

Don't seek a divorce—remain as you are unless the unbeliever leaves & then you can let them leave & seek peace.

But 1st Corinthians 7:14 says an unbelieving spouse is *sanctified* or consecrated by the influence of a believer's life with them.

So if you are unequally yoked, your marriage can be consecrated to God & you can have hope for godly influence.

1st Peter 3 offers the hope of a believing wife winning her husband.

So keep striving to love & reach your spouse & kids.

And if you are single, 1st Corinthians 7 says you can also remain as you are and enjoy the freedom of serving others as a single person.

Or you are not wrong to want to be married in the Lord.

But turn to Malachi 2 to see how serious it is to marry in the Lord.

Malachi was addressing sins of the Israelites against God & each other within their community of faith in the true God.

Read Malachi 2:10 to start seeing their grievous evil. [READ]

When Malachi spoke of “we all” who have one father and of “us” created by one God, he was not talking about all people.

We do all share the same Creator, but these parallel statements reference God as their Father in His covenant with Israel.

We don't have time to turn to other verses in Malachi & the rest of the OT to validate that further, but just know that this was an emphasis on those with faith in the God of Israel.

Their sins were against others as brothers & their covenant with God.

And the wording used here is important—the word for ‘deal treacherously’ appears 5 times in this section.

It means to act faithlessly, to deal deceitfully & not faithfully, to break trust & not keep a commitment.

Instead of acting with openness & honesty with faith in God's revealed will, there was deceit & cover-up to hide a lack of trust in God's Word & a lack of trustworthiness in general.

Whereas trust is the basis of relationship & the strength of genuine community, this word pictures breaking that trust, not keeping your word, being dishonest & breaking an agreement.

That treachery was a lack of faith to follow God that led to disobedience & a breakdown of community & trust.

That was heightened by trying to cloak it with rationalizations or excuses to hide the shadiness of trying to get around God's commands.

Do you hear that?—isn't that often what happens when someone is pursuing a relationship that they know is wrong?

When people are sinning, don't they often tried to hide or minimize it?

Yet as Malachi was saying, such sin is never private because it affects other believers & brings shame on God & His people.

Read Malachi 2:11 to see the evil described & named. [READ]

All that's described here leads up to the specific sin at the end of the verse—marrying the daughter of foreign god.

The description ‘daughter’ highlights being like that god, following that foreign god, being a worshipper of that false god.

The sin was marrying women who did not follow the true God.

The problem was that professing believers in Israel were marrying unbelievers from outside of Israel's God-given faith.

That was always the point when God told the Israelites not to intermarry with the pagan nations around them.

Exodus 34:10-16 prohibited such unequally yoked marriages as part of being set apart as holy to God & not mixed in with false religions.

Since marriage is the closest human covenant, He did not want marriage to pagans to lead His people & their children astray.

Be clear that God never prohibited mixed marriages based on ethnicity—it was always & only an issue of faith & religion.

We know that because foreigners like Ruth & Rahab married into Israel & were accepted by their faith in the true God.

The wrong mix & wrong intermarriage was always that of a believer marrying an unbeliever, of God's people with followers of false gods.

God always wanted His followers to marry other faithful followers & never to marry outside that community of faith.

And if you think this is not a big issue, realize that Malachi 2:11 again described it as dealing treacherously.

That's like saying they broke from faith with God.

And the seriousness is restated as an abomination—do know what that puts it in the same category with?

Do you think of burning children in a fire to the idol Molech & practicing witchcraft & conducting lewd idol worship are bad?

Those are abominations in God's estimation in Deuteronomy 18:9-13 like He says homosexuality & bestiality are in Leviticus 18:22-29.

And Malachi 2:11 puts marrying an unbeliever in that category.

Do you think that might be more serious than you had ever thought?

Verse 11 added that these sins profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which He loves.

Psalm 114:2 says that sanctuary is God's people whom He loved & set apart as holy to Himself when He gave His covenant at Sinai.

Exodus 19:5-6 called them His own possession, a holy nation, & Deuteronomy 7:6 & 14:2 repeat that special love of God.

So Malachi 2:11 was saying that Judah had ungratefully trashed her love relationship with God & become a dirty slave to the world.

And that was very offensive to God as a rejection of Him.

Do you see that?—marrying outside the faith breaks faith with God & acts like He is no different than any other idol.

That is true now just as it was in Malachi's time.

Marriage is first about God & that's why a believer marrying an unbeliever is such a serious sin.

Read Malachi 2:12 where it got more serious. [READ]

This was an appeal for a curse from God on any man who does this—who marries an unbeliever—to be cut off from the tents of Jacob.

Do you know what that meant—what being cut off meant?

It meant being banished from the nation & put out of the worshipping community of God.

The last phrase notes that such a one dare not bring an offering to Yahweh of the armies of heaven after defecting like this.

This would mark the serious end of a man's relationship with God & with all of God's people in Israel.

That's analogous to the 4th step of church discipline in NT church life because it's treating a person like an unbeliever.

Matthew 18:15-18 describes that, as does 1st Corinthians 5 & other passages with the concern that such a person repent & be saved.

So do you see how the language of Malachi 2:11-12 shows the seriousness of the sin of a believer marrying an unbeliever?

You can read Ezra 9-10 later to see how he dealt with this similarly.

Ezra confronted this sin seriously & listed the offenders names.

And you can also read Nehemiah 13:23-27 & you might be shocked by how serious Nehemiah was in dealing with this sin.

But remember why this is so serious—it's because of LOVE.

God wrote the book of Malachi because He LOVED His people.

He began by saying that in chapter 1—I have LOVED you!

So the reason God takes such things so seriously is because He loves His people & wants us to enjoy the full pleasure of His design.

God designed marriage for consecration, for sharing life set apart to love & serve Him.

Every warning & prohibition is a safeguard for His path of blessing.

So hear such warnings as gracious gifts of love for your joy.

God especially wants us to approach marriage rightly because it is His showcase of love on display in this world.

So He wants His people to be fruitful & multiply in His grace.

Don't settle for less than that.

Don't settle for less if you are single & preparing for marriage.

And don't settle for less if you are married because God will gladly empower you to change & grow in living His design.

As we said, it starts with surrender to God in Christ, with being forgiven & freed to follow God's Word in a fresh way.

If we can help you in that new life, please let us know.

Let's pray God will use these marriage refreshers to help us all.

Pray with me as we close.